

the second plane crash into the other tower.

Then a third plane flew into the Pentagon, taking CDR Dan Shanower's life. We only knew from the black, billowing smoke across the Mall that something terrible had happened, and we didn't know what was next. Someone came in and said: We are evacuating the building.

Everybody went pouring out on the east side of the Capitol in front of the Supreme Court building.

Tourists came up to me and said: You work here?

I said: Sure.

Where are we supposed to go? Where is it safe?

I didn't know what to tell them. There was no Capitol Visitor Center or anyplace. I directed them to the train station, the Metro station blocks away.

In the days that followed 9/11, we learned about the heroes of Flight 93. While we were standing on that lawn, thank goodness those passengers stood up and made a difference. They sacrificed their lives to stop that plane from crashing into the Capitol or the White House or whatever its final destination might have been.

Lynn Sweet of the Chicago Sun-Times did a special column, "Remembering 9-11" and particularly Todd Beamer. Todd Beamer was a Wheaton College grad who was a passenger on Flight 93. He managed to get in touch, using an Airfone, with Lisa Jefferson, and they spoke for about 15 minutes as Todd described what was going on in that airplane, and she told him what had happened at the Trade Center and the Pentagon. It was Todd Beamer who made that memorable statement "Let's roll" when they tried to take over the plane and gave up their lives in the process. Those were the true heroes.

It is heartbreaking that 20 years later, the gravest threat to America is not just the international terrorism but some terrorism that comes from within. Al-Qaida did not succeed in attacking this Capitol, but 9 months ago, homegrown American terrorists did.

As we speak, workers are preparing to reinstall a security fence around the Capitol to protect it from another gathering of violent White nationalists expected in Washington this weekend.

Former President George W. Bush spoke for many of us on Saturday when he said that the terrorists of 9/11 and the violent extremists at home may come from different cultures—these are his words: "But in their disdain for pluralism, in their disregard for human life, in their determination to defile national symbols, they are children of the same foul spirit, and it is our duty to confront them."

We have work of great importance before us. In the next few weeks, the Congress needs to find a plan to fund the government, protect our economy, protect the full faith and credit of the United States, make sure we pay our bills on time as promised. And isn't it

ironic that there is resistance to increasing the debt ceiling from the Republican side of the aisle when the increase in the debt ceiling is to pay for the debts incurred under President Donald Trump? It is his administration we are paying for with this vote. And the Republicans, many of whom supported him and continue to, don't want to balance the books and accept that responsibility.

#### AFGHANISTAN

Madam President, on a different matter, I will just close by saying that the Afghanistan situation should be put in the context of 13 brave Americans who lost their lives during that evacuation, but the fact of the matter is that 124,000 people, including 80,000 Afghans and 6,000 Americans, were airlifted to safety. They and the brave service-members and diplomats involved in the evacuation deserve our thanks and respect.

The missteps in Afghanistan began long ago. The U.S. first began peace talks with the Taliban more than a decade ago. Last year's Doha agreement was negotiated by the Trump administration. H.R. McMaster, Donald Trump's second National Security Advisor, recently called the deal "a surrender agreement with the Taliban." That is what Joe Biden inherited when he became President. And when it came time to face that responsibility, that is exactly what he said: I accept the responsibility for my decision. What a contrast with the previous President who accepted responsibility for nothing. This President said: I will make the decision. I will stand by it. It was time for America to end our longest war. It is time now for us to try to find a way to bring this Nation back together.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alabama.

#### SEPTEMBER 11

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, 20 years ago, September 11, 2001, Americans watched in horror as two planes struck the World Trade Center in New York City. We watched as another plane slammed into the Pentagon, and yet another bound for this very city crashed in Pennsylvania.

That day was the worst attack on American soil in our history. America's death toll surpassed Pearl Harbor in December 1941. That day, children came home from school without their parents; calls from family members went unreturned; lives were changed forever.

Yet instead of tearing us apart, instead of frightening Americans off the world stage, the cowardly attacks on September 11 brought our Nation together.

But just remember, we were at war with al-Qaida prior to 9/11/2001. In the 1990s, between 10,000 and 20,000 people went to Afghanistan to train to be terrorists. Insurgencies sprang to life in Algeria, Indonesia, Philippines, Somalia, and Yemen.

The World Trade Center was bombed the first time in 1993 by Ramzi Yousef, who spent time in a terrorist camp in Afghanistan. In 1998, al-Qaida bombed two U.S. Embassies in Africa. In 2000, al-Qaida bombed a U.S. warship, the U.S.S. *Cole*, killing 17 Americans.

The 9/11 Commission would later write: "The 9/11 attacks were a shock, but they should not have come as a surprise." That came from the Commission. But they were a surprise to most Americans because our leaders simply ignored the threat, issued a weak diplomatic scold, and promised "over the horizon" missiles and surveillance could solve the problem.

What solved the problem was American resolve and American might. That fighting spirit began on the bright blue morning of September 11, when a 32-year-old software salesman named Todd Beamer boarded United Airlines Flight 93.

Todd knew his plane was likely bound for another mishap or catastrophe after hearing it on the telephone just after takeoff. He knew that this plane was either headed for the Capitol or the White House. He knew what happened to the other flights because of conversations. But instead of being fearful, Todd Beamer rallied his other passengers.

The former college athlete stayed calm and prayed the Lord's Prayer. Then he and his fellow passengers unleashed hell on the hijackers of their plane. The moment Todd Beamer said "Let's roll" is the moment America began to fight back against radical Islamic terrorism. That is when the war started.

The whole country took up Todd's battle cry of "Let's roll." Over the next 20 years, 800,000 Americans rolled into Afghanistan—800,000. Of them, 2,461 were killed in action, including the 13 brave men and women we just lost a few weeks ago; 20,961 soldiers were wounded.

Their sacrifices were great, but so were their accomplishments. With 48 partnered nations, America smashed the Taliban and sent al-Qaida running for their caves in Pakistan. We killed Osama bin Laden and crushed terrorism networks around the world.

Over the past 20 years, the death toll from terrorists inside the United States was 107 because of our brave military that took the fight to the enemy overseas. One hundred and seven souls are still far too many in this country. But the Nation has been spared another catastrophic attack, while our All-Volunteer Force stood the watch in Afghanistan.

But here on the 20th anniversary of 9/11, what should be a resounding victory and success of American values and resolve is, instead, a defeat. And it is an especially bitter defeat to Americans all across this country. It is bitter because Americans surrendered 20 years of blood, sweat, and tears to the enemy.

The Taliban now controls more of Afghanistan than they did in 2001, and

they are better armed with American guns, vehicles, and aircraft.

It is bitter because it was entirely preventable. It is bitter because those who work in national security know in their hearts that the President is wrong when he says the "war is over."

Mr. President, the war is not over. The war is over when your enemy accepts defeat. Our enemy, the Taliban, are not defeated; they are emboldened.

President Biden has handed them the greatest victory of their pitiful, pitiful history, a victory greater than they could have ever dreamed.

Using this victory as propaganda against the United States will be recruiting gold for the Taliban. Make no mistake, now that they have sent America running for the exits in Afghanistan, they intend to bring the terror we saw at Kabul's airport home to us right here in the United States of America.

We cannot allow that to happen because now, after our Commander in Chief decided to leave behind—let me repeat that—leave behind American taxpayer-funded equipment, the Taliban is one of the top 10 best equipped militaries in the world.

Over 44,000 military vehicles were left behind, nearly a half a million guns left behind, 33 Black Hawk helicopters left behind. All are now in the hands of our enemy. And we are fooling ourselves if we think they are not going to use this equipment against us.

Early last week, 10 of my colleagues on the Senate Armed Services Committee joined me in calling for hearings on the Biden administration's chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan.

As members of the committee that overseas our Nation's Armed Forces, we bear a particular responsibility to seek—I mean seek—true and correct answers. We asked to hear from the Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Milley; the commander of U.S. Central Command, General McKenzie; and the last commander of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan, General Miller.

These are our top military leaders who need to be asked the hard questions, and that is what I and my colleagues intend to do, starting with why did we give up the most strategic air base in the middle of Asia, Bagram Airfield? Why did we do that? It makes no sense.

We owe it to our Nation, those who served, their families, and our allies to preserve the records of how our time in Afghanistan ended. For every people we and members of the Armed Services Committee represent here in Congress, this is the biggest issue facing our military since Vietnam. Those who have given so much to this cause are demoralized and disheartened. I have talked to hundreds of them in the last couple of weeks.

Al-Qaida didn't defeat our military. The Taliban didn't defeat our military. The complexities of rebuilding a country did not beat our military. This ad-

ministration in Washington, DC, defeated our troops.

Never in American history have we seen a Commander in Chief leave Americans behind enemy lines. It is unheard of, unheard of in the history of this country. I cannot think of a single fighting man or woman who would leave an American behind. It does not make sense. That is why they fight. That is why our military fight. We do not leave people behind. But they were ordered to leave by our Commander in Chief.

To those soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, guardsmen who served in Afghanistan, I promise you this: We will get answers from this administration.

If you are a member of the military or you have served our Nation and you have questions, I hope you will reach out to my office. I am ready to be your voice. I am ready to fight with you for your answers and accountability. I want to thank Chairman REED and Ranking Member INHOFE for scheduling hearings so that we can do just that in the next few weeks.

On September 11, America said: "Never forget." Thousands upon thousands of Americans have taken that rally cry to the enemy. To them I say: America has not forgotten. We will never forget. We will answer the fight, and we will fight for these answers.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING LANCE CORPORAL RYLEE MCCOLLUM

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor today to pay tribute to the life and service of LCpl Rylee McCollum. He was from Bondurant, WY.

On Thursday, August 26, the United States lost 13 men and women in uniform: 11 marines, an Army soldier, and a Navy corpsman. They were killed by a terrorist attack in Kabul, Afghanistan. At least 20 additional marines were wounded. It was the deadliest day for our Nation's military in more than a decade.

One of those fallen heroes was LCpl Rylee McCollum. He was just 20 years old. Rylee McCollum's life demonstrated the best of our Nation. His dad Jim told me that Rylee was full-blooded red, white, and blue—and from the very beginning.

Rylee's dad Jim wanted to serve in the military, but he couldn't because of a medical issue. Well, his son Rylee grew up with that same great desire to serve our Nation. Rylee's family said he wanted to be a marine from the very beginning. His sister Royce said that he ran around in his diapers and cowboy boots with his rifle.

He attended Jackson Hole High School. He graduated from Summit In-

novations High School in Wyoming. And he made a real name for himself all around the State as a champion wrestler.

Now, he had the kind of talents and abilities with which he could have done anything and everything. He wanted to serve America. He joined the Marines literally as soon as he could. He signed up on his 18th birthday. His plan was to serve in uniform and then come home to Wyoming. His goal was to teach history and coach wrestling.

On August 26, on his first deployment, he stood guard at the Hamid Karzai Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan. He protected the airport as Americans and our allies escaped to safety. His mission saved thousands of lives. While Rylee was protecting others, he was killed by a terrorist bomb.

Now, Rylee had just been married in February. His wife Gigi was expecting their first child, and he was excited to become a father. His child will never know Rylee. Yet his child will always know that Rylee McCollum, her father, was a hero.

On Friday, I stood side by side with Rylee's family and his pregnant wife Gigi at the airport in Jackson, WY, as Rylee's flag-draped casket was brought home for his very last trip to Wyoming. And today I got a text from Gigi with this magnificent picture. The text came within the last hour or so, and we were able to do a blowup of the text picture: Naval Hospital, Camp Pendleton, WY, welcomes baby girl Levi Rylee Rose, 8 pounds, 10 ounces, September 13—today—at 2 a.m. There is the baby, and there is the cutout of her father, Rylee McCollum.

Madam President, people in Wyoming and all across America have shown their love and respect and appreciation and admiration for Rylee and his family. People have already donated close to a million dollars to help Gigi and the baby. They donated these funds through a GoFundMe page on the internet, and it is a testament to the gratitude of the American people for the life and service of Rylee McCollum.

After Rylee's passing, a family friend in Jackson named Regi Stone told a story on Facebook. The story is about a conversation he once had with Rylee and with Regi's son Eli. Eli also serves in uniform. Regi says Eli and Rylee once said: If anything ever happened to us, just know we were doing what we loved.

What Rylee McCollum loved was protecting others. What Rylee McCollum loved was service. What Rylee McCollum loved was America.

And as Jim McCollum told me, he said: Rylee is standing guard tonight at the gates of Heaven.

Madam President, Rylee McCollum is an American hero. His name will always be held in honor throughout Wyoming. For the half-million people of our State, we all think of Rylee and Gigi and now the baby as part of our family.

May God comfort his family, and may God continue to bless this great